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## THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY

THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition. The Priory is affiliated with Shasta Abbey whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C. Shasta Abbey is the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives of the Soto Zen Church and is located in Mount Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and follow the teaching and example of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

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THE JOURNAL OF THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY is published as a service to all those who are seriously interested in the practice of Buddhism. Through the Journal, members and friends of the Priory are able to share their experience and understanding of Buddhist training. Opinions expressed in each article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Abbot, the Editor, or Throssel Hole Priory. The Journal is published quarterly and costs £6.00 p.a.

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# News from the Tiger's Lair



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[News from the Tiger's Lair is reprinted from the *Journal of the Order of Buddhist contemplatives*. It appears here with the kind permission of the author, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C.]

## "...And to the source kept true," Part I: The Immaculacy of Emptiness.

Some years ago I changed the translation of the word 'mu' in the *Hannyashingyo*, or *Scripture of Great Wisdom*, from 'voidness' or 'emptiness' to 'purity.' This was not an idle change or a personal opinion since it was based on my master's and my own understanding of the teachings of Bodhidharma of whom we are both direct descendants. Many translators of *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*, being Christian missionaries and therefore frequently more interested in converting Buddhists to Christianity than having an accurate, in-depth understanding of what Buddhist Scriptures teach, were not as careful as I believe they could have been in their translations: had they been so, they would have discovered that 'voidness' and 'emptiness' are words that only peripherally touch the implication of 'mu.' Anyone who meditates deeply and has any real spiritual realisation knows that this voidness and emptiness are the fullest

voidness and emptiness possible. I used the phrase "the immaculacy of emptiness" to try and push people on beyond emptiness and voidness for many years: in the end, however, I decided that the teachings of Bodhidharma, whose authority on the subject is absolutely unimpeachable, made it extraordinarily clear that the word 'mu' should be translated as 'pure' and that western Buddhists should not be intimidated by the trick sophistry of those who only peripherally understand Zen. The following is a quote from sermons attributed to Bodhidharma, translated by Red Pine, on immaculacy and emptiness:-

Fourth, practising the Dharma. The Dharma is the truth that all natures are pure. By this truth, all appearances are empty. [Emphasis added. J.K.] The sutras say, "The Dharma includes no being because it's free from the impurity of being. And the Dharma includes no self because it's free from the impurity of self." Those wise enough to believe and understand this truth are bound to practise according to the Dharma. Since the embodiment of the Dharma contains nothing worth begrudging, they give their body, life and property in charity, without regret, without the vanity of giver, gift or recipient, and without bias or attachment. And they take up transforming others to eliminate impurity but without becoming attached to form. Thus, through their own practice, they're able to help others and glorify the Way of Enlightenment. And as with charity, they also practise the other virtues. But while practising the six virtues to eliminate delusion, they practise nothing at all. This is what's meant by practising the Dharma.'

The use of the words 'void' and 'empty' have led many, many, good, prospective, western Buddhists to despair since what they found was an empty emptiness, but what Bodhidharma speaks of here is an emptiness,



or a voidness, full of immaculacy. An immaculate thing is clean and pure. Here the word 'pure' contains both the peripheral meaning of 'empty of dirt, filth and defilement' and the pictorial representation of fire burning up uncleanness as seen in the Chinese character 'mu.' It implies purity by its very shape and bears out Bodhidharma's, my master's and my own understanding of the use of the word 'pure' in *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*. I again quote Bhodidharma:-

*That which follows is witnessed on the Way. It's beyond the ken of arhats and mortals. When the mind reaches Nirvana, you don't see Nirvana. Because the mind [itself] is Nirvana. If you see Nirvana somewhere outside the mind, you're deluding yourself.<sup>2</sup>*

This paragraph is the authority, backed by discussions with my master, for my translation of the words "And, going on beyond this human mind, he IS Nirvana" in *The Scripture of Great Wisdom*. I quote again Bodhidharma:-

Every suffering is a Buddha-seed. Because suffering impels mortals to seek wisdom. But you can only say that suffering gives rise to Buddhahood. You can't say that suffering is Buddhahood. Your body and mind are the field. Suffering is the seed, wisdom the sprout and Buddhahood the grain.<sup>3</sup>  
[Emphasis added. J.K.]

Thus Bodhidharma describes the Four Noble Truths: suffering exists, when we find the cause of suffering we find wisdom, the end of suffering is the sprout of the Buddha-seed, and Buddhahood is the result of the Eight-fold Path, the grain. I again quote Bodhidharma:-

When the three poisons [greed, hate and delusion] are present in your mind, you

live in a land of filth. When the three poisons are absent from your mind, you live in a land of purity. [Emphasis added. J.K.] The sutras say, "If you fill a land with impurity and filth, no buddha will ever appear." Impurity and filth refer to delusion and the other poisons. A buddha refers to a pure and awakened mind.<sup>4</sup>

Here the characters for 'mind' and 'heart' and 'centre' are frequently also translated as 'Buddha Nature' or 'That which is the essence of a human being;' 'mind' should not be thought of as the intellectual mind. Again Bodhidharma says, "According to the world, there's male and female, rich and poor. According to the way, there's no male or female, rich or poor."<sup>5</sup> It is upon this that Dogen Zenji, having proved it true for himself, based his teaching on the equality of the sexes in Buddhism. Says Bodhidharma, "When the Goddess realised the Way, she didn't change her sex. When the stable boy awakened to the Truth, he didn't change his status. Free of sex and status, they shared the same basic appearance" [Nature].<sup>6</sup> To think thus is to understand the Path. As Bodhidharma says, "To seek nothing is bliss. When you seek nothing, you're on the Path."<sup>7</sup> To be contented with yourself as you are is to be on the Path. This is because a person has understood the true meaning of purity and is neither empty, and therefore in need of something, nor full, and therefore complacent.

I would not have gone into this matter at all had I not heard recently that someone had changed the word 'pure' back to 'void' or 'empty' when using *The Scripture of great Wisdom*. Of course anyone can use any translation they wish. The translations that I have made, as I have said, were not made upon my single authority, and I was interested to see that the translation of the *Sandokai* and *The Most Excellent Mirror---Samadhi*, used here in Shasta Abbey, are now the official English translations of the Soto Church in Japan. This article should not be understood as a defence of the use of the word 'pure' in *The Scrip-*



ture of Great Wisdom but simply as an attempt to explain why the word 'pure' and the phrase "He IS Nirvana" are much more in-depth translations than the old Christian 'empty' and 'void' were.

Whilst on this subject I would like to bring up one other matter, which is the constant complaint of some Christians that Buddhism is atheistic. The following is a quote from the *Udana Scripture*, found in *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*, Part II, 'Verses of Uplift,' Chapter VIII, section iii:-

Monks, there is a not-born, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded. Monks, if that unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded were not, there would be apparent no escape from this here that is born, become, made, compounded. But since, monks, there is an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded, therefore the escape from this here [that] is born, become, made, compounded is apparent.<sup>e</sup>

I have used various terms for the implication of the Unborn, Undying, Unchanging, Uncreated. It was my master who called it 'That Which Is.' When I suggested 'The Eternal,' he thought it a good explanation. To explain something by what it is not is just as good an explanation as to explain it by what it is. The apophatic and cataphatic ways of expressing the inexpressible are equally good, and explaining the inexpressible by what you know for certain it is not prevents over-statements and serious mistakes. Anyone who believes that Buddhism is atheistic should study the *Udana Scripture* with great care; the Christian missionaries had a lot of difficulty with it and, in the end, decided, in many cases, to be rude about it or to just pooh-pooh it. That which is True does not have to insist upon the Truth: those who are real Buddhists understand this clearly. To quote from *The Song of Bernardette*: "To those who believe, no explanation is necessary, and to those who don't, no explanation will ever suffice." I do not expect what



I have written here to convert the unbelievers, only to let them know that I hope they eventually come to realise the Truth.

[To be continued]

#### Notes.

1. Great Master Bodhidharma, *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*, trans. Red Pine (Port Townsend, Washington: Empty Bowl, 1987), p.3.
2. Ibid., p.31.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p.32.
6. Ibid. The goddess is spoken of in Chapter Seven of *The Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra*, trans. Charles Luk (Berkeley, California: Shambala Publications, 1972), pp.70-80.
7. *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*, p.3.
8. Trans. by F. L. Woodward, M.A., (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p.98.

#### The Cost of Reality: Continued from November, 1975

Staying true to the source can take more courage than might at first seem necessary. There are always those members of a community, and Shasta Abbey is not without them, who have gone off after studying for only a short time, denied their discipleship and then set up on their own as teachers. Such people frequently lead those unfortunate enough to study with them into grave error. In the last year or so, as a result of mistakes made by various teachers throughout this country and reported in newspapers, we have seen a number of disgruntled students setting themselves up without a thorough knowledge of what it is they teach. It was reported to me recently that a former student of another group, now teaching, had informed one of Shasta Abbey's disgruntled students that "Zen

teaching since I countenanced hallucinations." Keizan Zenji, the founder of Soji-ji, had many visions. Koho Zenji and the Ancestors and the Great Master Xu Yun, who died in 1959, all taught, as I teach, that visions happen, that you do not get involved with them---you learn from them. I strongly recommend people to read *Empty Cloud*, the autobiography of Xu Yun, obtainable from our Buddhist Supplies Shop and elsewhere. I realise that it is a lot easier to believe what masters say when they are dead than when they are living. I also realise that real religion is much harder for some to swallow than playing silly little Zen games with the adjunct 'pongy' poetry. When students become dissatisfied with their teachers and wish to set themselves up in their places, either because of genuine or imagined mistakes on the part of those teachers, they make accusations. Since several teachers have been abandoned by those students, it would appear that some of the latter now wish to discredit all teachers of my generation. Since they cannot impeach my morality, they are accusing me of heresy. In a forthcoming issue of this journal there will be an article on *kuken*(J.) which is the heterodox belief that has caused them to make their present mistakes.

Because people were being foolish with regard to the above, I allowed parts of what I now call *How to grow a Lotus Blossom* to go into print. I sent these to Soji-ji for the approval, or disapproval, of the masters and I received that approval. It is true that junior monks and laymen are taught to pay no attention to visions: this is because they can get involved with them and then do not know how to handle them. Whether people like it or lump it, visions happen and will continue to happen. The fact that this so-called teacher made such a comment proves a number of things to me:- (1) he doesn't know enough yet to be a teacher, (2) he doesn't know that there is a precept against talking about others and rumour-mongering which, as a teacher, he should know very well and (3) he is a coward since he can't say these things to my face, only behind my back.



I know that this magazine goes primarily to members of our congregation but it also goes to other places and, if what I have said here helps even one person not to get caught by those who have denied their masters and set themselves up in their places, then I will not have wasted my time. I realise that in saying what I have, I have spoken against others which is breaking a precept; I take the karmic consequences thereof.

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# Southern Priory - Progress Report

As many of you will know, we are hoping to open a second Priory somewhere in the south of England. Some people have already made substantial donations; I am especially grateful for this as I realise that, until we have a specific property, those making donations do so knowing that the eventual location may mean they will not be able to benefit personally as much as they would wish.

The exact location of the Priory will depend upon suitable premises being available at a price we can afford. We have not yet begun a serious search as we need to establish a financial base to pay either rent or mortgage payments. To help with this, we are seeking donations, especially in the form of covenants or regular monthly payments; so far we have raised £4,460 in cash, and covenants totalling £160 per month. Our initial target is a minimum of £500 a month although the eventual costs will probably be higher. As soon as we have reached the target, or at least got much closer than we are now, we will start a thorough search for suitable property.

We would consider renting or buying anything large enough to house two people, with a meeting room for up to twenty people to meditate in, and a small room for receiving visitors and where counselling could be done. We would consider disused buildings we can adapt, premises due for demolition which we can rent for a limited period---more or less anything that for some reason is outside the present inflated house market. Those who live in the south of England, please keep your eyes open for empty offices, shops, barns... even small schools might be worth asking about. A semi-derelict property we could fix up may also be suitable. If you see something which might suit us, find out who the owner is and then please get in touch with the Priory. Also, if you have any connections with large property-owning organisations who may have



empty buildings on their books, and if you would be willing to approach them on our behalf, please let us know.

A rented house is probably the simplest solution; however, I do not wish to commit us to paying rent until I am sure that, for the time being, the prospect of buying is out of the question. Once we start paying rent, it will be very hard to save money for an eventual purchase.

The area west of London , accessible to motorways and rail links from London itself, did seem the best geographical location. However, prices in this area are among the highest in the country and we are not likely to be able to afford the £100,000 plus asking price.

One way forward seems to be to forget about any prospect of buying for a while and to rent a property in a specific town and raise money on this basis. I have been reluctant to take this course until we have allowed time for word to spread of our needs in the hopes of a suitable property becoming available. I will not raise money on the impression that the Priory is to be in a specific area and then later it turns out to be somewhere else. Your comments would be appreciated.

*Rev. Daishin Morgan*

\* \* \*

# No Abiding Place

Rev. Daishin Morgan M.O.B.C.

In our school we teach that the purpose of training is to become one with the Eternal; that the Buddha Nature is inherent within all beings, and because of this we can realise enlightenment by cleansing the mind of its defilements through single-minded meditation.

As with all statements about the Truth, this can be misunderstood. The above teaching should *not* be understood to mean that within the body there is an eternal essence and when we realise that essence we shall be enlightened. One of the foundations of Buddhism is the teaching of *anatta* or no separate self. We should not understand the Buddha Nature to be a surrogate self and we should avoid the temptation to conceive of it in personal terms. The view that there is a spiritual essence abiding within the body that transmigrates into another body at death was a view put forward by a Brahman scholar named Srenika in the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*.<sup>1</sup> The Buddha argued against this view and reaffirmed the teaching of no soul. This view has therefore become known as the Srenika heresy. It is one of the false views into which Buddhists have been particularly prone to fall.

One form of the Srenika heresy is the belief that the Buddha Nature exists independently of the body, that it is the real nature of enlightenment, and that this nature is not shared by the body. In this view, the body is the shell or vehicle of the spirit and by coming to know this spirit, or real self, we will return to the eternal existence and no longer be subject to reincarnation. This view states that the six worlds<sup>2</sup> appear because the real self is obstructed by greed, hate and delusion; or, to put it another way, birth and death only have an existence separate from enlightenment. A variation on the same mistaken theme



is that liberation is not dependent upon birth and death, and that birth and death are not dependent on liberation. It is wrong to view birth and death (or the six worlds) as a delusion and as separate from enlightenment.

The view put forward by the Serene Reflection School is that enlightenment cannot be separated from birth and death---mind and body are one. Great Master Dogen says:

When a teaching speaks of eternity, all is eternal, so body and mind must not be separated: when a teaching speaks of cessation, all things cease, so spirit and form must not be separated. It is contrary to the Truth to say that the body dies whilst the mind lives eternally; understand clearly that life and death are nirvana itself and that we cannot speak of nirvana without life and death. You are completely wrong if you think that the wisdom of the Buddhas is free from life and death: your mind knows and sees, comes and goes and is not eternal in any way; you must understand this completely for Buddhism has always maintained that body and mind are one.<sup>3</sup>

It can be tempting to think of training as leading to an escape from birth and death or to some kind of heaven. We can also be tempted to rationalise away our fears of death by putting our faith in the view that we shall continue in the life of the spirit. This is not what it means to understand birth and death; it is merely to cling to the spirit instead of clinging to the body. The result is still to be caught in delusion.

Many of us begin life seeking refuge in the body, in material things, in people, or in the world. If we are fortunate and have a little insight we begin to realise the futility of a refuge dependent on transient things. The temptation is then to seek refuge in what appears to lie beyond this world. We seek a

'spiritual' refuge but do not give up our clinging to self. The result is that we invent a false 'spiritual' refuge to which we cling. We have a cardboard Buddha and our nirvana is a heavenly realm that we will enter at death. We may call this becoming one with the eternal, but this is not the real Eternal. Later on, if we sincerely seek to train and are prepared to let go of all our opinions and beliefs, we can take the great Bodhisattva Vows wherein we vow to save all sentient beings before we have saved ourselves; we vow not to enter enlightenment until every blade of grass has realised the Truth. To take this great vow is to surrender all *ideas* of a refuge. As the *Diamond Scripture* puts it:

Bodhisattvas should forsake all conceptions of form and resolve to develop the Supreme Enlightenment Mind....Their minds should abide nowhere. If (their) minds abide somewhere, it will be in falsehood.<sup>4</sup>

If we are to take these words of the Buddha seriously, we should not think of ourselves as real, nor as unreal, nor should we think of the Buddha as real or unreal---we should not waste time with mental conceptions, but simply get on and do zazen. If we practice meditation seriously then all becomes clear. Meditation is not clinging to anything; it is 'neither trying to think nor trying not to think---just sitting.'

When we 'abide nowhere' is there just empty nothingness? Emphatically NO! Yet we must not cling for an instant. When we do not cling, we can cast off body and mind naturally. Each thing in the universe is then fully alive. Birth and death are the complete activity of enlightenment. Although a chasm may seem to open beneath our feet, if we take one more step in faith, we then find ourselves in the realm of enlightenment.

The two legs upon which Buddhism stands are wisdom and compassion. To abide nowhere is not enough. The



Buddhas and Ancestors out of their compassion show the way to enlightenment. They do so by pointing to the existence of That which is beyond all clinging. When you sit still and allow body and mind to fall away, That Which Is fills the universe. It is limitless compassion and we cannot help but be overwhelmed by gratitude. It is this that we refer to in our tradition as the Eternal. There are those who object to this usage on the grounds that to speak in positive terms is to postulate a God. What they do not realise is that to speak only in negative terms is to lack compassion and the courage to break free of the tyranny of words. That Which Is is neither positive nor negative: It is beyond the opposites. This does not mean we cannot say anything about It; it means we have to let body and mind fall away and then whatever expression we use will reveal the Truth. Do not be afraid of words. Listen with the heart and the meaning becomes clear. Even so, if we think of the Eternal as anything, then we make it into our own image. 'The Eternal' is not God,<sup>5</sup> nor is the Buddha Nature 'mine'.

This last point is very important. The ultimate authority in the Zen tradition does not lie in the words of the Scriptures but in their essence. This does not mean we throw out the Scriptures; on the contrary, we revere them highly. But in applying the Precepts and the Scriptures to our daily life, the interpretation does not depend on minute regulations and laws, but on being in accord with the essence. This essential nature, or Buddha Nature, is the final authority. It was upon this that Shakyamuni relied and it is by trusting ourselves to this source that we become followers of Shakyamuni. Whenever the final authority lies outside a structure, the structure may at times be turned on its head. Such a way can therefore be dangerous---the mystical way always has been. The alternative is the way of regulation where the authority is a revealed law that must be followed, and the standard of understanding and practice is judged by how closely one follows the revealed law. This is dead religion and therefore safe religion. The way of Zen is alive and sometimes it can go wrong.

The classic mistake is to begin to think in terms of 'my' heart is telling me this, or in 'my' meditation the teaching is such and such. These personal pronouns may be used as nothing more than a figure of speech, but sometimes they reveal that there is too much of 'me' and not enough heart.

Since there is nowhere for the mind to abide, the heart of meditation is not ours, and yet it embraces us. Our understanding is therefore not unique and we can and must be willing to check with others to make sure we are not deluding ourselves. Where there is this willingness, the way becomes much safer. This is why we take refuge in the Sangha.

Having nowhere to abide, and seeking nowhere to abide, is to be able to see the Buddha within birth and death. If we try to avoid birth and death we cling to an abiding place and cause much suffering to ourselves and the world. True homelessness must be the abode of all trainees. Freedom such as this can be frightening since everything we have ever relied upon is swept away and we cannot clutch after a substitute. However, for those who make such a leap, there is the certainty of the True Refuge---the Eternal. To overcome one's fears and find true liberation, we need do nothing more than actually practice true meditation. When we do so, life is true life and death is true death, neither of which are what we think they are. Death is not cessation, nor is it the eternal life of the self.

\* \* \*

#### Notes

1. The Mahayana *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* [J. Nehangyol].
2. The worlds that appear to their inhabitants to be separate from the realm of enlightenment. They are heaven, hell, the world of ambition, the animal world, the hungry ghosts world, and the human world.
3. From Dogen Zenji's *Shobogenzo*: 'Bendowa' [Lecture on Training] in *Zen is Eternal Life*, p. 148.

4. *The Diamond Sutra*, trans. by Charles Luk, (Ci Hang Trust, 1987), p. 11.
5. God the father, creator of heaven and earth, judge of mankind, director of the destinies of men.

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#### PHONING THE PRIORY - IMPORTANT CHANGE

We have recently improved our phone system so it is now possible to answer phone calls more easily. In the past, we often asked people to phone back in the evening if a particular person was unavailable. We now wish to change this policy and ask that people phone the Priory about general business matters only at the following times:

Tuesday - Saturday: 9.30 - 12.30am  
2.30 - 5.30pm

Of course, if your call is urgent (especially for spiritual counselling) you may phone outside these hours when necessary.

\* \* \*



# The Keeping of the T



## Arrival....

Almost fifty lay people attended the *Keeping of the Ten Precepts Retreat* [J. Jukai], March 20-27. They arrived on a cold, wintry Monday; however, during the retreat the weather gradually improved and by the end of the week a promise of spring was in the air. This year's schedule gave people an excellent chance to concentrate hard on their training, with more formal meditation than usual as well as the expected classes. The first ceremony was the *Reading of the Ten Precepts* on Tuesday evening; this quiet ceremony formally opens the Jukai retreat and underlines the all-importance of the Precepts in spiritual training.

## Precepts Retreat 1989

On Thursday afternoon, Rev. Master Daishin was the celebrant at the *Ceremony of Lay Ordination*. Twenty-one lay people received the Precepts for the first time thereby choosing to commit themselves to Buddhist training: Diane Stevens, Martin Law, Angela McGrath, Philip Hartas, Eileen Nicholson, Hazel Hodgkinson, Henry Logan, Joyce Tartaglia, Julian Skinner, Andrew Prescott, Stacey Ash, Elizabeth Hart, Michael Sheldon, John Ryder, Paul Fisher, Dorte Haahaus, Chris Shelton, Rawdon Goodier, Kevin Gaffney, Christopher Jones, and Brian Gay. We congratulate these lay trainees and wish them every success in their future training.



*Clean-up time.*

On the Friday evening, the great *Ceremony of Contrition and Conversion* [J. Sangel was celebrated. Sange is the facing of one's karma with courage and compassion and then cleansing it through daily training. To stress the importance of this, the temple is thoroughly cleaned and tidied during the day and all trainees bathe themselves carefully.



*Following in the footsteps of the Buddha..*

*The Ceremony of Following* where the Precepts, as the Blood of the Buddhas, lead does not begin at a specific time. At some point during the day the Abbot leaves his house and begins walking around the monastery carrying his begging bowl and staff. When the monks and lay people notice him they join on behind and follow where he leads---it is not a matter of just waiting around until the ceremony starts; we get on with whatever work we have to do, but drop it as soon as we see or hear the procession and quickly take our place in line. The procession winds and rewinds in a



seemingly haphazard fashion until the Abbot eventually leads it into the ceremony hall. There he explains to the congregation the meaning of the Bloodline Certificate [J. Ketchimyaku] which the new lay Buddhists are about to be given.

*From these Precepts come forth such a wind and fire that all are driven into enlightenment when the flames are fanned by the Buddha's influence....*

The last ceremony, *Recognition*, was celebrated on Sunday evening; it is a joyful acknowledgment of the Buddha Nature in all those present, as well as in all beings in the universe. An excellent Jukai ended the next day with a hearty brunch after which the retreat guests began to leave.



*....and departure*

# Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata

Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata  
O Buddha of Radiant Health!  
Great healing powers at His Command,  
He blesses the Eastern Buddha Land.  
Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Radiant Health!

To reach the sacred mountain peak  
Where lapis lazuli rare is found,  
The ancient sages gave their lives  
To kneel upon that holy ground;  
The precious stone is hard to see,  
And harder still to hold and keep,  
A radiance pure, of deepest blue,  
With flames of gold which dance and leap;  
And if the journey seems too long,  
The path too steep to climb,  
Celestial beings will help us find  
This precious gem, the Deeper Mind.

Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Healing Power!  
His faith and stillness unexcelled  
Do rising passions quickly quell.  
Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Healing Power!

In His vast celestial realm  
Two Bodhisattvas share His throne,  
Suryaprabha, O Radiant Sun,  
Candraprabha, O Radiant Moon;  
Twelve Yaksha generals, fierce and bold,  
Like blazing stars forever shine,  
And keep an endless vigil bright  
To guard the Buddha's Truth sublime;  
Deep rays of purple, gold, and blue  
Illuminate His heavenly crown,  
And from His great compassionate heart  
Unseen blessings rain gently down.

Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Excellent Faith!  
Despair, the sickness unto death,  
He cures with skilful tenderness.  
Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Excellent Faith!

The Lapis Lazuli Radiance One  
Reveals the dawn to those who sleep  
Nightmared in darkness, fear, and pain,  
Appeasing all our mortal grief.  
Adorned with Indra's glowing net,  
His perfect form arrayed in jewels,  
Of flawless beauty, it provides  
A tranquil dwelling, a refuge true.  
The Healing Buddha's glorious vows  
Give joy and comfort to mankind;  
His nectar sweet and soothing fruit  
Bring lasting peace to troubled minds.

Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Tender Thought!  
If we obey His timeless Law  
True health is ours for evermore.  
Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Tender Thought!

Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Radiant Health!  
Great healing powers at his command,  
He blesses the Eastern Buddha Land.  
Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata,  
O Buddha of Radiant Health!

C. Passmore

[Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett has set the above poem to music choosing an ancient melody of great beauty and depth to complement the words. This hymn is sung at the *Festival of Bhaisajya-Guru-Tathagata* which is celebrated in October.]



# Dependent Origination

Rev. Koshin Schomberg, M.O.B.C.

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## Introduction.

The teaching of Dependent Origination is a detailed explanation of the second of the Buddha's Four Noble Truths: "The cause of suffering is craving rooted in ignorance." Out of the rich variety of our experience the teaching of dependent origination selects a few elements that are essential to spiritual training. Its intention is to show the necessary relationship among these elements. It shows us how our choices entail consequences that are of great importance to us. This practical purpose is paramount in each step of this teaching.

Dependent Origination portrays the life history of a stream of karma. It divides this life history into three periods. The first of these is the period comprised of all existences prior to this present life. The second describes the present life of a human being who is continuing to accumulate suffering. The third shows the course of future existences given the present state of the person concerned.

The term *Dependent Origination* (or *Dependent Arising*) is a translation of the Sanskrit word *Pratitya-samutpada*, meaning 'arising from (or dependent upon preceding or, in some cases, co-existing) conditions.' The emphasis upon the causal relationships within our experience is fundamental to Buddhism. For if we know, or at least have some intuition, that our present state of mind and all of the circumstances of our present life are founded in past

and even present) choices, then we know that we have the most important role in the determination of the spiritual future of our stream of karma: even the most powerful negative habits and delusions, which were created over a long period of time, can be transformed and converted over time. The teaching of Dependent Origination is a magnificent tapestry within which both the causes of suffering and the causes of spiritual conversion are displayed.

## 1. The Karmic Inheritance from Past Existences.

The most striking point about the two steps of Dependent Origination that show the functioning of cause and effect in past existences is that these are exactly the essential elements of past life memories when they take place as a result of training in Meditation and Precepts. We will expand upon this point after examining the meanings of the terms employed in these steps.

The first two steps are expressed as follows:

Volitional activities depend upon ignorance.  
Relinking consciousness depends upon  
volitional activities.

The word *ignorance* is a translation of the Sanskrit term *avidya*. I have found it helpful to think of ignorance in two complementary ways. One way emphasizes the fact that ignorance, understood as 'not knowing' about something fundamentally important, is itself the consequence of previous mistakes. (We will return to this point in discussing the very last step of the twelve-step chain of Dependent Origination.) In this aspect, ignorance is not knowing that transient experiences and relationships cannot ever provide the true and enduring Refuge that all beings seek and that must be found in the seeming darkness of pure faith. The deeply habitual tendency to mistake external things for this Refuge is undermined and converted through the practice of Meditation, which is in reality simply the opening of the heart to its True

Refuge. It is this aspect of ignorance that we emphasize when we recognize that all beings are at all times doing the best they can, even when great suffering results from their actions. A good synonym for ignorance in this aspect is *confusion*: if we *knew* better---if we were not confused---we would *do* better.

The other aspect of ignorance emphasizes the fact that ignorance is always in some way volitional. We *choose* to *ignore* That which is real when we confuse passing experiences for our True Refuge. Even when the karmic habit-energy of confusion is present, there is simultaneously present a deep intuitional knowing of the Eternal. Again, the effort of Meditation is the effort of being still and receptive so that we can discern the 'still, small voice' of our True Refuge amid the voices of karmically inherited greed, hate and delusion.

I would like to emphasize that we may make many choices without being clearly aware that we are doing so. Often, the aspect of ignorance as an ignoring of something important is only revealed when we see the consequences of our actions. Suppose one is driving down the road, sees a recent accident between other cars, gawks at the sight, loses control of one's own car and hits a telephone pole. It may only be upon waking up in the hospital that one recalls clearly the moment in which one felt the need for extra caution in passing the site of an accident, but simultaneously chose to indulge curiosity instead. That sense or feeling that it is good to do, or refrain from, such and such can be very quiet and uninsistent. Yet we ignore it at our own risk. The 'still, small voice' need not be, and for most people probably rarely is, literally a voice. It manifests in infinite numbers of ways. It may be as simple as a plain lack of interest in some activity that is spiritually unwholesome. Or it may be a strikingly clear and powerful intuition or vision. Whether we *know* we are hearing it or not, it is always present. Meditation greatly deepens our awareness of this Reality and helps us to see the choices that we make from moment to moment.



It is this latter aspect of ignorance that is emphasized in the first step of Dependent Origination. However, it should be understood that these aspects are both always present within ignorance. The aspect of ignoring emphasizes karmic cause. For the wheel of cause and effect is kept rolling only through volitional action, the exercise of free choice.

The term *volitional activities* is a translation of the Sanskrit word *samskara*. There are three kinds of volitional activities: volitional activity of body, speech and thought. Our suffering and our enlightenment are equally the products of the use of our will. Suffering indicates the wrong use of the will at some time in the past: the experience of enlightenment indicates the rightful use of the will. There are spiritually wholesome and unwholesome volitional activities. Unwholesome activities of body, speech and mind are described in the Ten Precepts. The Precepts describe bodily actions that result in suffering (such as slandering) and unwholesome mental attitudes (pride, anger, judgementalism.) Wholesome volitional activities include acts of generosity and compassion, kind speech, and the cultivation of the mental attitudes of respect and gratitude (another way of describing the attitude of meditation.)

Volitional activity is one of the five aspects of the flow of our experience that are especially emphasized in Buddhist teachings. These five aspects are called the five *skandhas*, a Sanskrit term that simply means *group or factor or aggregate*. The last term is usually used as the English translation. Another word sometimes used is *heap*. No English word is really adequate for giving a sense of the meaning of *skandha*. However, the word *aspect* has, I feel, a considerable advantage in that it emphasizes the fact that the *skandhas* have no separate reality in themselves. This point is of the utmost importance, for there is a very great difference between looking at the flow of our lives through five helpful windows and asserting that that flow is somehow composed of these five factors as a building is composed of four walls and a roof. The

skandhas are a useful mode of analysis, not building blocks. The skandhas, then, are identifiable aspects of one unity. They are not metaphysical entities. The emphasis is always upon the unity and the constant flow (impermanence) of our experience.

Later steps in the chain of Dependent Origination will involve us in further discussion of the skandhas. I have gone into them here in order to emphasize the fact that, since these are five aspects of our experience which are functioning as parts of an indivisible unity, throughout our lives, the essential question is not whether or not we will do volitional activity, but rather what kind of volitional activity we will do. It is a consequence of being born as humans that from moment to moment we must use our will. The spiritual delusion of quietism is in fact an effort to avoid volitional activity altogether---which, of course, is nothing but a form of volitional activity. The more one trains in Buddhism, the more one becomes aware of the extent to which volition is present within even the subtlest attitudes and forms of awareness. Spiritual training is the effort to use volition in the wisest possible way.

The right use of volition is always to look up, to go forward in faith through both darkness and light, knowing that there is the Eternal and It is the Reality of all changing things. The mistaken use of volition is always, to some extent or other, a looking down, an act of despair. We are not necessarily fully aware of our faith when we exercise it. Similarly, we are not necessarily aware of despair when we exercise it. The right use of volition is willingness; the wrong use of volition is willfulness, the indulgence of greed, hate and delusion.

The word *karma* itself means action and refers, in Buddhism, only to volitional action. The understanding of volition as one of the five inextricable parts of our experience reveals that as long as we are alive we have to make choices. And the law of *karma* states that each of those choices is going to have

consequences. The more deeply we penetrate this simple truth, the more we must wish to live the very best spiritual life possible.

The second step of Dependent Origination connects volitional activity with consciousness. Consciousness (Sanskrit: *vijnana*) is another of the five skandhas. Again, consciousness does not occur separately from the other skandhas, nor is there consciousness without an object of consciousness; consciousness is always consciousness of something. The kind of consciousness referred to in the second step of Dependent Origination is that state of consciousness at the time of death that precipitates the rebirth process. That is why it is called *relinking consciousness*: it links up one life with another within one continuous stream of karma. Buddhist teachings identify several general types of such conscious states. For example, if a dying person has committed some terrible act during his life, the thought of that act, together with associated feelings which might include remorse, guilt, pride, vindictiveness, and so on, might form the relinking conscious state. A particularly strong and obsessive negative habit might also be the basis of the relinking consciousness, as might the memory of some kind action or wholesome habit. Karmic influence from past lives can also manifest and affect the rebirth process.

We can now put the terms that we have discussed into use in examining briefly the first two steps of Dependent Origination. The first step, 'volitional activities depend on ignorance,' refers specifically to the fact that, out of ignorance, beings in our karmic past made mistakes. The second step of Dependent Origination, 'Relinking consciousness depends upon volitional activities,' expresses the fact that the attitude of mind of those beings at the time of their death was the inevitable consequence of their volitional activities, which included those mistakes.'

When people who have been training in Buddhism have experience of their karmic past, the points in



that past that are emphasized are exactly the points emphasized in the first two steps of Dependent Origination. As Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett has often said, we are shown our karmic past so that we can avoid repeating its mistakes. Therefore, the memories that arise are the memories of volitional activities in which beings caused suffering to themselves and others. As part of that memory, there is almost always a deeply intuitive sense that the being who committed these acts did so out of ignorance. There was a genuine confusion about the wisest and best course of action---a 'not knowing' which led to mistakes. Insight into this 'not knowing' enables us to see the purity of intent that underlies even the greatest mistakes. There was also, in some way, an element of not paying sufficient attention to something which was calling out---however quietly---for attention or care. This is the aspect of ignorance as an *ignoring*. Thus it is that unwholesome volitional activities depend upon ignorance.

The recollection of the attitude of mind at the time of death is also a common element in memories of past lives. This is also shown so that we can see the consequences of volitional activities rooted in ignorance. That dying attitude often involves self-judgement, either in the form of self-blame or in the form of self-justification. But what is needed at the time of death is the complete and joyful willingness to let go of all illusive separateness and melt into oneness with the Eternal. The teaching of our karmic inheritance always embodies in particular ways the general truth that if we make external things and goals our reality, we can expect them to remain our reality at the time of death. Thus beings blind themselves to the glorious and infinite True Reality of the Eternal, which is the birthright of every living thing. If, however, during this present life, we find our hope, our Refuge, our love and our consolation in the Eternal, then the karmic consequence of this life of faith at the time of death will be either complete cessation of the stream of suffering, or its considerable diminishing.

In the next article in this series, we will look at the features of our present life that are emphasized in the teaching of Dependent Origination.<sup>2</sup>

[To be continued]

\* \* \*

### Notes

1. These first two steps in fact encompass wholesome as well as unwholesome volitional activities and this explains how beings move from lower to higher rebirth realms. However, the thrust of the teaching in these steps is to show the main elements in the creation and perpetuation of suffering and so I am limiting the discussion to this more specific point.
2. For an example of the application of this teaching in the cleansing of past karma, please see Rev. P.T.W.H. Jiyu-Kennett, Roshi, *How to Grow a Lotus Blossom: or How a Zen Buddhist Prepares for Death* (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey, 1977), pp. 52-53.

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# GUEST DEPARTMENT NEWS

## SUMMER RETREAT PROGRAMME

### WEEK RETREATS:

July 10-16 & August 14-20

With its emphasis more on the maintainance of steady progress in meditation, a week retreat is less intensive than a sesshin; but, by having smaller groups for classes and other activities, a more intimate atmosphere can be created in which to explore topics of particular interest to participants. Practical application of the Teaching will be given prominence whilst maintaining a strong emphasis on formal meditation.

### TYPICAL SCHEDULE

5.30	Rising	1.35	Rest/Kitchen clean-up
5.45	Meditation	2.30	Work
6.20	Morning Service	3.30	Midday Service/ Meditation
7.20	Temple clean-up	4.15	Tea/Class
7.50	Breakfast	5.15	Meditation
8.20	Reading	6.00	Supper
8.50	Meditation	6.35	Rest/Recollection
9.25	Work	7.25	Meditation
11.15	Tea	8.40	Vespers
11.45	Meditation	9.45	Lights out
1.00	Lunch		

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## LESSHINS:

July 22-29 & August 28-September 3

Lesshin means 'to search the Heart.' It is an opportunity to go deeply into meditation in a more intensive way than is usually possible in one's regular daily practice. This is reflected in the longer periods of time spent in formal meditation and the much reduced work periods.

### TYPICAL SCHEDULE

5.00	Rising	1.30	Rest/Kitchen clean-up
5.15	Meditation	2.30	Work
5.50	Morning Service	3.30	Midday Service/ Meditation
6.50	Temple clean-up		
7.20	Breakfast	4.15	Tea
7.50	Reading	4.30	Meditation
8.20	Meditation	6.00	Supper
8.55	Work	6.35	Rest/Recollection
10.10	Meditation	7.25	Meditation
11.35	Tea	8.40	Vespers
11.50	Meditation	9.45	Lights out
12.30	Lunch		

Guidance in the form of lectures and the opportunity for personal instruction will be offered. Emphasis will be upon looking deeply within to one's True Nature by understanding the causes of suffering within oneself and all things. Through fearlessly confronting self we discover we are already one with enlightenment and begin to see how this enlightenment can be allowed to manifest in our lives. Although the Lesshin weeks are strenuous, a common momentum develops with the help of one's fellow retreat guests which helps most people reach a level of application difficult to sustain on one's own.

# NEWS

**Monastic Events:** On March 15, the *Head Novice's Installation Ceremony* took place with Rev. Wilfrid Powell taking over the position of Head Novice for the spring term. Later, during the monastic sesshin in May, Rev. Wilfrid successfully completed the *Head Novice's Dharma Ceremony* during which the Head Novice is questioned by the assembled monks on a verse from the scriptures chosen by him. Rev. Wilfrid chose a passage from Chapter 49 of the *Shobogenzo*:

Resolve is the determination to become  
the body and mind of Buddha and awaken  
from the sleep of illusion....

The *Head Novice's Spring Tea Ceremony* was also celebrated during the monastic sesshin; here, the Head Novice makes a compassionate offering of cooling tea for the health of the community.

In April, Rev. Myfanwy Abbie received the Transmission from Rev. Master Daishin, as Transmission Master, with Rev. Mokugen as the Precepts Master. *The Light of Buddha is increasing in brilliance and the Wheel of the Dharma is always turning.*

In May, Max Schreurs from Wageningen, The Netherlands, entered the community as a postulant, the first step in one's monastic training. On June 1, Rev. Master Daishin ordained Toby Thompson who was given the name *Houn Giffard* which means: *One who gives boldly within the Dharma Cloud.* Our best wishes go to Max and to Revs. Myfanwy, Wilfrid, and Giffard, and we pray their training continues to deepen.

Early in June, we were pleased to welcome back Rev. Mugo White to Throssel Hole Priory after over eight years' training at Shasta Abbey. Her return to the community here means there are now eight senior monks in residence at the Priory.

**Funerals and Memorials:** On March 29, three monks from the Priory travelled to Huddersfield to conduct the funeral of Mrs. Law Kud Ying Yau, a member of the Chinese community. Memorial ceremonies have been celebrated for Frieda Goralewski, Maire Ni'hEartain (Rev. Alfrid's mother), and for Clifford Streeter.

An animal funeral was performed for Shep, Gillian Craig's dog.

**Other Ceremonies:** At the spring equinox, April 1, the *Festival of the Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts* was held for those beings who have not yet found true peace; the next day we celebrated the *Festival of Manjusri Bodhisattva*, who is the embodiment of Great Wisdom; and later in April we celebrated the *Festival of Great Master Keizan*.

The *Wesak* retreat, May 5-7, was a great occasion with just over a hundred people, monks and lay guests, attending the *Festival of the Buddha's Birth* on the Sunday morning. During the ceremony the twenty or so children present made their offerings of beautiful paper lotuses to the baby Buddha, and poured holy water over His head. Afterwards, they each received a small gift from Rev. Master Daishin.

Naming ceremonies have been held for Jisho Lang, Henry Parry, and Laura Rose Gittins.

On Saturday, June 17, Rev. Master Daishin was the celebrant at the wedding of Duncan Sellers and Diane Stevens.

**New Publication:** 'A Buddhist's Guide to Children's Books and Activities.' 32pp. This booklet has been put together by Karen Richards & Iain Robinson, with contributions from Rev. Myoho Harris. It is available from: Iain Robinson, 7 Ballot Hill Crescent, Bilborough, PRESTON, PR3 0RX. A donation of £1.10 to cover costs would be appreciated; any suggestions for future editions would also be welcomed. We would like to thank Karen and Iain for all the hard work they have put into this project.



**Work Projects:** We have had a busy time of late with various projects under way around the property. A second 'water-collection trench' has been dug in the top field to improve our water supply; our road has been widened and the car park extended; the main house has been painted, the entry to the kitchen widened and the paving stones relaid; the area in front of the Ceremony Hall has been much improved with paving stones laid, the road gravelled, and extra flower beds planted.

**Outside Talks & Retreats:** A full teaching programme has been undertaken this quarter with monks travelling to Guildford, London, Tunbridge Wells, Cardiff, Stourbridge, Newcastle, Lancaster, Chesterfield, Leeds, Manchester, Edinburgh, and St John's Lee Rectory. Rev. Master Daishin attended the West Midlands Buddhist Group Wesak Festival in Leicester in May, and spoke to a meeting of the Richmond Fellowship in London; he also visited the Cancer Support Group, Riding Mill.

**Donations:** We are grateful for the following donations: Incense, silk flowers, candlesticks, curtains, several Buddhist books and scriptures, and a small portable altar; clothing, tools, cat & dog treats, many plants, shrubs, seeds, and garden supplies; a toaster & grill, towels; and warm sweaters for monks.

The kitchen thanks all those who have kindly given so much food to the community in recent weeks. Your support is greatly appreciated.

**Begging Bowl:** The Infirmary could use a lap or bed tray (one with legs); the Bookshop requests large padded envelopes, tissue paper, and padded plastic bubble sheets.

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## SMALL AMITABHA SCROLL

Amitabha, Buddha of the Western Paradise and Infinite Light, who helps beings to find the Pure Land of Eternal Meditation, is shown standing in an open green and gold lotus. His right hand is raised in the gesture of turning the Wheel of the Law, whilst his left hand is lowered in the bestowal of blessings and teaching the Dharma. He has the traditional deep red and gold robes and dark red top knot of an Amitabha; from the halo around his head bursts forth rays of blue and golden light.

This central picture is set against a rich background of red/gold and blue/gold brocade. Measuring  $4\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and  $11\frac{3}{4}$ " long, with a purple hanging cord at the top and a gilded wooden rod at the bottom, this scroll is suitable for a first altar, (in place of a statue), or as a wall hanging.

Price £4.50 (Inc. p. & p.)

## VIMALAKIRTI POSTER

This poster,  $14\frac{1}{2}$ " wide by  $20\frac{1}{2}$ " high, in delicate ruddy browns against a border of patterned beige, is of a Sung Dynasty scroll that was painted in ink on silk. Printed in China on sturdy, good quality paper, it shows Vimalakirti, the ideal Buddhist Layman whose name means 'Spotless Virtue,' reclining on a dais with a figure, possibly his wife, in the background.

Price £6.00 (Inc. p. & p.)

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